



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

DHS HOTLINE GETS RECORD NUMBER OF LAW ENFORCEMENT TIPS

Calls to Vermont center surpass FY-04 total in first 6 months of FY-05

WILLISTON, Vt. – The Department of Homeland Security's national tip line, 866-DHS-2ICE, has already received more calls in the first six months of this fiscal year than it did the entire previous fiscal year, announced Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont.

The tip line, which has already received more than 41,500 calls this year, is based at the ICE Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) here. The center received 27,671 calls during Fiscal Year 2004.

ICE law enforcement personnel staff the tip line and the center around the clock every day to take tips about suspicious activity or reports of crime. These crimes range from national security to public safety, including a wide range of immigration and customs violations.

“The tip line monitored by the LESC is a critical link between the public and the Department of Homeland Security. It generates important law enforcement leads that are crucial to the fight against crime and terrorism,” said Assistant Secretary Garcia. “Alert citizens, using the Law Enforcement Support Center tip line, are making significant contributions to homeland security.”

“The LESC is an incredible resource that multiplies the effectiveness of law enforcement offices across the country, and that's why I have been a strong supporter since the day it opened,” said Senator Leahy. “The tip line has made the LESC an even more effective tool for both the law enforcement community and the general public.”

ICE initiated the LESC tip line in July 2003 with the launch of Operation Predator, a comprehensive national law enforcement initiative targeting those who sexually exploit and abuse children. The tip line was developed as an accessible way for the general public to report suspicious activity in Operation Predator cases. Since then, its use has expanded to cover a much wider range of criminal activity.

Using information received from tip line callers, the LESC quickly develops actionable leads and forwards them to ICE field offices for further investigation and law enforcement action. Leads generated from tip line calls have resulted in the arrests of a wide range of criminals, including aggravated felons, smugglers, fugitives, sexual predators and aliens who have re-entered the country after being deported.

Tip line leads have resulted in the following enforcement actions over the past year:

- **Indentured Alien Rescued near Milwaukee** - A call to the tip line led ICE special agents to a woman who had been held in indentured servitude for nearly 20 years at a married couple's home. ICE rescued the woman. Her captors were arrested and have been indicted in federal court for human trafficking. The indictment states that the couple used "threats of serious harm and physical restraint to coerce the woman to serve as a domestic servant." The couple is now awaiting trial in federal court and face a maximum of 65 years in prison and \$1.25 million in fines. The couple's son also faces federal charges for making false statements to ICE agents during the investigation.
- **Spouse Abuser Criminal Aliens Captured in Baltimore** - A call to the LESC tip line reported that a felon who had previously been deported had returned to the United States was harassing his ex-wife and children. ICE agents located and arrested the man, who now faces federal felony charges for re-entering the country after deportation. In an unrelated case, Baltimore ICE agents apprehended another man who had been deported after a conviction for assaulting his wife and daughter. He was caught trying to re-enter the United States with a fake visa, thanks to a tip provided to the LESC. He was convicted and sentenced to 41 months in prison.
- **Miami Drug Smuggler Stopped** - An anonymous tipster called the LESC to report that a known drug dealer was attempting to smuggle a shipment of narcotics into the United States. An LESC inquiry revealed that the man was wanted by ICE on numerous criminal violations. ICE alerted the law enforcement community to be on the lookout for his arrival. As a result, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Miami nabbed the dealer as he attempted to smuggle drugs into the United States.
- **Tip Leads To Accused Child Abusing Alien in San Francisco** - A call to the LESC tip line alerted ICE to a New Zealand man who had been charged by local police with continuous sexual abuse of a child, incest and other felony child sexual abuse crimes. ICE placed a detainer on the man when it was discovered that he had violated his immigration status by overstaying his visa.
- **Wisconsin Tip Nets Convicted Sex Offender** - A tip from Madison, Wisc., led ICE investigators to a convicted sex offender from Mexico. The investigation showed that the man, who was convicted of sexually assaulting a child, had been previously deported. Agents arrested him and he is being criminally prosecuted for re-entering the country after deportation. He faces up to 20 years in federal prison.

In addition to accepting tip line calls, the support center provides local, state and federal law enforcement personnel in all 50 states with real-time information on the immigration status and identity of aliens suspected, arrested or convicted of criminal activity. This helps officers accurately determine the identity and status of any person who has been stopped. Officers communicate with the LESC through secure law enforcement channels to obtain rapid response to inquiries on individuals encountered in their daily duties. Through the first six months of FY 2005, the LESC has responded to more than 337,000 such inquiries. During FY 2004, the LESC assisted law enforcement across the nation more than 667,500 times.

LESC technicians are also responsible for entering records of immigration violators in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database, a computerized index of criminal justice information that is used by law enforcement agencies nationwide. To date, more than 157,000 immigration violators have been entered in NCIC, including information on previously deported felons, fugitive absconders and other immigration violators.

“Since the day it began as a pilot program serving a single county in Arizona,” Leahy said, “the men and women at the LESC have provided a critical service to police officers on the street and the entire law enforcement community. I am proud that Vermonters are on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help keep our country and our communities safe.”

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.